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Athens, Thebes and Plataia and the end of the sixth century BCE*

Abstract: One of the key events in the relations between the Athenians and Thebans was the Plataian decision to align themselves with the Athenians at the end of the sixth century BCE. This decision shook up the contemporary political landscape and proved to be a source of hostility between the two neighbouring polities throughout the fifth and fourth centuries. The orthodox view holds that the original alignment took place in 519 during the Peisistratid tyranny, based on the date given by Thucydides 3.68.5. This date, in the mind of some scholars, seems contradictory with the story of the Plataian alignment as given by Herodotus (6.108.1-6.). This inconsistency resulted in a search for alternatives that fit the Herodotean narrative better. To accommodate this change, they relied on emendating the Thucydidean text, but there is no sign of corruption in this part. Emendation of a text is best avoided, although the controversy merits attention. Therefore, in this article it will be argued that the two narratives – the Thucydidean and the Herodotean – need to be separated. What follows is a renewed chronology of Plataian-Athenian relations. The orthodox date (519) was the date of an original Peisistratid-Plataian alliance that did not lead to hostilities with Thebes. Instead, it is in the context of the foundation of the Athenian democracy and the subsequent clashes with Thebes after 507/6 that the Herodotean narrative should be placed.

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Boiotia was known in antiquity for its endemic, internecine conflict. That is perhaps best reflected in a phrase attributed to Pericles. He compares the Boiotians to holm-oaks; for just as these are beaten down by knocking against each other, so are they taken down by their civil strife.¹ Even the largest and biggest polis in the region, Thebes, had difficulties maintaining a grasp over its neighbours. Several of these openly detested and refused renewed attempts of hegemonic control. The most notorious dissidents were the Plataians, and their proximity to Athens aided their recalcitrance. In later times the latter served as their enabler by proxy. The imbroglio of intra-Boiotian relations and their position *vis-à-vis* the Athenians have intrigued scholars since the nineteenth century. This article is a renewed attempt to detail the changing political landscape of central Greece at the end of the sixth century, as it was in this context the Plataian alliance with the Athenians took place. Novel advances in our understanding of early common polities and new epigraphic finds from Thebes offer potential for an unconventional scope on these capricious times. Orthodoxy has dictated that the two sources elaborating the origins of this relationship, Thucydides and Herodotus, are compatible and refer to the same event, creating a uniform history of these events guided by the principle that a Plataian-Athenian rapprochement automatically led to conflict with Thebes. But the authors do not claim to describe

¹Arist. *Rhet.* 3.4: καὶ εἰς Βοιωτοὺς, ὅτι ὅμοιοι τοῖς πρίνοις: τοὺς τε γὰρ πρίνους ὑφ' αὐτῶν κατακόπτεσθαι, καὶ τοὺς Βοιωτοὺς πρὸς ἀλλήλους μαχομένους. All translations are my own, unless otherwise stated.

the same event: that is a retrojection by modern scholars. Thucydides only mentions a date, with the Plataians themselves providing the background story for an Athenian alliance. Herodotus does describe events leading to an alliance but without mentioning a date.

Traditionally, the story follows the account of Herodotus. In 519, the Thebans and Plataians had a conflict as a result of Theban expansionism. The Plataians approach several candidates, who rebuff them. Only when they approach the Athenians as supplicants do they find protection from Theban aggression. That provided the Peisistratids – the tyrants of Athens – with a religious reason to accept the Plataian plea. The alliance agitated the Thebans and from then on, their relationship with their two southern neighbours was marked by conflict. Even the change in leadership in Athens – from tyranny to democracy – did not change the situation. A close reading of both texts reveals that we may have been misled through the historical agents – the Plataians – that created this past to reflect the situation in their present. Their identity depended on opposition to Thebes with the help of Athens. What that created is the history described in both Thucydides and Herodotus as we have it today. Yet underneath there lurks a possibility to approach these texts with an open mind and avoid the pitfalls of following historical narratives created by others.

Therefore in this article what will be argued instead is that both accounts need to be separated as the authors treat different accounts altogether. Thucydides' firm dating of an Plataian-Athenian alliance – 519 – allows for little manoeuvring. Herodotus' account, on the other hand, appears to resemble the situation of a later date, 507/6.² In treating both accounts separately, it is possible to disentangle the two alliances from their fifth century trappings and open up the discussion to eventualities that reflect a different history, rather than the one that was

² All dates are B.C.E. unless stated otherwise. The date of the alliance, 519, is based on Thuc. 3.68.5: καὶ τὰ μὲν κατὰ Πλάταιαν ἔτει τρίτῳ καὶ ἐνενηκοστῷ ἐπεὶ δὴ Ἀθηναίων ξύμμαχοι ἐγένοντο οὕτως ἐτελεύτησεν (“Such was the end of Plataia in the ninety-third year after she became an Athenian ally”).

remembered by the fifth-century Plataians and reflected in the writings of both Thucydides and Herodotus.

Of course, close reading can only take us so far. After arguing for a separation of the two accounts, contextualising the divorced events can offer a plausible backdrop to explain why it is possible we are dealing with two different accounts as this separation adds a multi-layered facet to the dominant narratives of Atheno-Boiotian relations. Contrary to the inevitable conflict professed in other works, here it will be asserted that the Plataians initially entertained friendly ties with their Theban neighbours. Only when the latter attempted to tighten their grip over the region and the *koinon* did things turn sour. This coincided with the ascension of the Athenian democracy and their repeated attempts to consolidate the northern frontier of the Attic peninsula. These political changes had a profound effect on matters in central Greece and form the backdrop to the Plataian alliance as described by Herodotus.

In the first section the Herodotean account will be analysed and placed against the fragmentary and scanty historical knowledge of the late sixth century, coupled with an assessment of Thucydides' aims and goals in offering a date for the alliance. What follows is a commentary on the presumed hostilities that flared up after the Plataian alliance. The third section deals with the political changes in the late sixth century and offers these as a more plausible environment for the Herodotean account.

I An analysis of Herodotus and Thucydides

The origin of the Plataian alliance is described by Herodotus in the lead-up to the Battle at Marathon to explain the appearance of a Plataian contingent on the battlefield (Hdt. 6.108.1-6):

Ἀθηναίοισι δὲ τεταγμένοισι ἐν τεμένει Ἡρακλέος ἐπῆλθον Βοηθέντες Πλαταιέες πανδεμεί. Καὶ γὰρ καὶ ἐδεδώκεσαν σφέας αὐτοὺς τοῖσι Ἀθηναίοισι οἱ Πλαταιέες, καὶ πόρους ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι συχνούς ἤδη ἀναραιπέατο: ἔδοσαν δὲ ὧδε. πιεζέμενοι ὑπὸ Θηβαίων οἱ Πλαταιέες ἐδίδοσαν πρῶτα παρατυχοῦσι Κλεομένει τε τῷ Ἀναξανδρίδῳ καὶ

Λακεδαιμονίοισι σφέας αὐτοῦς. οἳ δὲ οὐ δεκόμενοι ἔλεγόν σφι τάδε. ἡμεῖς μὲν ἐκαστέρω τε οἰκέομεν, καὶ ὑμῖν τοιήδε τις γίνοιτ' ἂν ἐπικουρίῃ ψυχρή· φθαίητε γὰρ ἂν πολλάκις ἐξανδραποδισθέντες ἢ τινα πυθέσθαι ἡμέων. συμβουλευόμεν δὲ ὑμῖν δοῦναι ὑμέας αὐτοῦς Ἀθηναίοισι, πλησιοχώροισι τε ἀνδράσι καὶ τιμωρέειν ἐοῦσι οὐ κακοῖσι. ταῦτα συνεβούλευον οἱ Λακεδαιμόνιοι οὐ κατὰ τὴν εὐνοίην οὔτω τῶν Πλαταιέων ὥς βουλόμενοι τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἔχειν πόνους συνεστεῶτας Βοιωτοῖσι. Λακεδαιμόνιοι μὲν νυν Πλαταιεῦσι ταῦτα συνεβούλευον, οἳ δὲ οὐκ ἠπίστησαν, ἀλλ' Ἀθηναίων ἱρὰ ποιούντων τοῖσι δωδεκά θεοῖσι ἰκέται ἰζόμενοι ἐπὶ τὸν βωμὸν ἐδίδοσαν σφέας αὐτοῦς. Θηβαῖοι δὲ πυθόμενοι ταῦτα ἐστρατεύοντο ἐπὶ τοὺς Πλαταιέας, Ἀθηναῖοι δὲ σφι ἐβοήθεον. μελλόντων δὲ συνάπτειν μάχην Κορίνθιοι οὐ περιεῖδον, παρατυχόντες δὲ καὶ καταλλάξαντες ἐπιτρεψάντων ἀμφοτέρων οὖρισαν τὴν χώραν ἐπὶ τοῖσιδε, ἔαν Θηβαίους Βοιωτῶν τοὺς μὴ βουλομένους ἐς Βοιωτοὺς τελέειν. Κορίνθιοι μὲν δὴ ταῦτα γνόντες ἀπαλλάσσοντο, Ἀθηναίοισι δὲ ἀπιοῦσι ἐπεθήκαντο Βοιωτοί, ἐπιθέμενοι δὲ ἐσώθησαν τῇ μάχῃ. ὑπερβάντες δὲ οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι τοὺς οἱ Κορίνθιοι ἔθηκαν Πλαταιεῦσι εἶναι οὔρους, τούτους ὑπερβάντες τὸν Ἀσωπὸν αὐτὸν ἐποίησαντο οὔρον Θηβαίοισι πρὸς Πλαταιέας εἶναι καὶ Ὑσιάς.

As the Athenians were marshalled in the precinct of Heracles, the Plataians came to help them in full force. The Plataians had put themselves under protection of the Athenians, and the Athenians had undergone many labours on their behalf. This is how they did it: Under pressure from the Thebans, the Plataians gave themselves up first to Cleomenes, son of Anaxandrides, and the Lacedaimonians, who happened to be near. They did not receive the Plataians but told them this: “We live farther away, and to you any aid would be pointless; you might be enslaved many times in advance of us being informed of anything. We advise you to give yourselves up to the Athenians, men who live nearby and not bad for help.” The Spartans advised this not out of goodwill towards the Plataians as much as in order to embroil the Athenians with the Boiotians. The Spartans advised as such to the Plataians, and they did not mistrust them, but while the Athenians were sacrificing to the twelve gods they came as suppliant to the altar, giving themselves up. When the Thebans heard this they marched against the Plataians, but the Athenians came to their aid. As they were about to engage in battle, the Corinthians did not stand aside: since they were there, they mediated between the two sides at their request, and decided their boundaries, allowing that the Thebans would suffer the unwilling Boiotians to not contribute to the Boiotians.³ Once the Corinthians had decided this they started to leave, but the Boiotians attacked the Athenians as they were leaving, but were defeated in battle. Crossing the Asopos, the Athenians made it the border between the Thebans and Plataia and Hysiai. (trans. A. de Sélincourt).

Interpretation of this account has led to various extremes in scholarship. Some regard it as a complete fabrication inspired by the contemporary events in which Herodotus was writing. Others see it as a truthful history that details the situation circa 519.⁴ A third strand of

³ Following the translation of Mackil (2013), 27. Another is “to subscribe to the Boiotoi,” by Hammond (2000). He mentions that τελέειν normally means “to pay taxes,” which would support Mackil’s notion.

⁴ Moretti (1962) and Hennig (1992) completely disregard it as a fabrication. Those who have loyally followed it as the original story for 519: Beloch (1893-1904), I 391; Meyer (1884-1902), 723; Cloché (1952), 30ff.; Hammond (1955, 1992); Gomme (1956), II 358; Buck (1972), 94-96; Picirilli (1973), 42-46, no.9; Frost (1984), 291; Prandi (1988), 27-41; Badian (1993), 109-124; Schachter (2016a); Hornblower (1991), 464.

scholarship has noted the apparent discrepancies between the story presented here and the date given by Thucydides. Their criticism is principally aimed at the “incidental” presence around Plataia of the Spartan king Cleomenes and the Corinthians at that time. This leads them to suggest that the alliance transpired either in 509 or 506, when these two parties can be placed in the vicinity of Plataia.⁵ On both occasions, Cleomenes guided troops into Attica with hopes of installing a befriended aristocrat, Isagoras, as tyrant of Athens. The only issue is that the date given by Thucydides prevents this. Accordingly, these scholars have emended the text to correct this difficulty. There is a problem with this method, however, as there are no signs of corruption in this part of the Thucydidean text that would allow an emendation.⁶ These cannot be applied whenever it behoves the modern historian and therefore we cannot rely on textual alterations to conform ancient history to our preferences.

That is not to deny the merit of cherry picking Herodotus’ account for subtleties that belie a possible later date than the one given by Thucydides. Especially if we emancipate ourselves of the notion that there is no middle-ground between the divergent strands of thought, there are options at hand. What united these scholars was a preference to conflate these two accounts in one inaugural event, thereby ignoring the complexities and nuances that this relationship merits. What available clues could point towards two separate events?

Other scholars have pointed at the presence of Cleomenes and the Corinthians, but there are other indications that it treats a period after the Peisistratid tyranny. Whenever Herodotus treats the tyranny, he normally names the Peisistratids as the actors in events involving other

⁵ Grote (1846-1856), II 442, n. 54; Busolt (1885-1904), II 399, n. 4; French (1960), 91; Salmon (1978), 20ff.; Amit (1970); Ducat (1973); Tausend (1992), 181-182 all follow 509, with Konecny, et al. (2013) the most recent adherent. Shrimpton (1984) proposed 506; Anderson (2003), 259 n. 11 sees the latter as a viable option.

⁶ Develin (1990), 506 stands as the year Attica was invaded by Boiotian, Chalkidians and Peloponnesian troops; Burn (1962), 187-188; Cook (1983), 92; Berthold (2002) propose 507. For the arguments presented here, however, this debate has little impact.

poleis or rulers.⁷ On other occasions, perhaps in an attempt to emphasise the difference between the two, the Athenians are juxtaposed with the tyrants in the text. Either the former are subjected to the Peisistratids, or they actively oppose them (Hdt. 1.62-63; cf. 1.59-60). That provides a stark contrast with the democracy. In those cases, Herodotus speaks of the Athenians as independent actors pursuing their own policies.⁸ The omission of any Peisistratid involvement in the Plataian episode is therefore striking: it only describes how the Plataians came under Athenian protection.

The terminology employed by Herodotus is distinctively different from Thucydides, who speaks of an alliance (*symmachia*), whereas Herodotus uses verbs such as ἐδεδώκεσαν.⁹ The latter has frequently been mistaken to imply some form of slavery due to a myopic reading of the evidence. Nevertheless, an unequal relationship is alluded to. A recent proposal clarifies this puzzling situation. Crane argues for a form of client-patron relationship that incorporates the inequality in autonomy without equating the Plataians with slaves.¹⁰ That could mean that there was a development in the relationship with the original alliance evolving into a stricter, unequal one. This reading appears to be supported by Thucydides, who at the start of the Peloponnesian War mentions that the besieged Plataians had to confer with the Athenians before they could take any sort of action, reminiscent of the relationship Herodotus describes (Thuc. 2.73.1; Cf. 3.54.4; 3.64.3). That leaves us with the issue of the nature of the Thucydidean alliance, and the

⁷ Particularly Hdt. 5.94; 6.39; cf. 1.61; 5.63; 5.65; 5.91; 6.35.

⁸ Cf. Hdt. 5.64; 5.73; 5.77-79; 5.91. It was also the Athenians who were making sacrifices at the Altar and they are involved in all the actions undertaken: defending the Plataians, marching out against the Thebans, beating them in battle and re-delineating the borders. A similar sentiment comes from Anderson (2003), 259 n. 11 that the actions undertaken are more in line with the early democracy after the fall of the tyranny.

⁹ Sommerstein and Bayliss (2013), 186, n. 3 mention that Herodotus rarely uses *symmachia* and if so, only in combination with *omnumi* or *horkos*. Yet there are no signs in the fragment 6.108 that even suggest an alliance or treaty.

¹⁰ Badian (1989), (1993), 221 n. 27 for a state of *douleia*. His over-reliance on Paus. 1.32.3 is noteworthy, especially because subsequent archaeological research at Marathon undermines the Periget's story somewhat, that the Plataians were thrown in together with the slaves, cf. Hammond (1992); Mersch (1995); Raaflaub (2004), 76-78 for objections to this notion of *douleia*. For the client-patron relationship: Crane (2001).

similarities in his work to Herodotus' account, when the Plataians describe their dealings with Athens. How to solve this conundrum?

For the first issue it is important to make the distinction between the political entities described by the two authors. *Symmachia* simply means an accord to fight together between two equal partners. The origin of the *symmachia* can be traced back to earlier Archaic times when it entailed connections forged between elites for a specific military need. Later it also incorporated future potential needs and was extended to include whole communities.¹¹ In a sense, this reflects Peisistratid Athens. *The tyrants* were the community in terms of foreign interaction on behalf of the Athenian polis on the level of intra-polis relations.¹² The tyrants were still in charge in 519. That means that the alliance Thucydides refers to is an alliance between the tyrants and the Plataians, or at least the elite in charge of the latter. Creating bonds with elites in central Greece seems commonplace in Peisistratid tactics, as they had befriended the Thebans and Thessalians. With the tyrants' influence in the Cyclades waning, increasing their efforts to fortify their northern position made sense.¹³

The second aspect is a matter of intertextuality and mutual awareness between both Herodotus and Thucydides. In a convincing fashion Simon Hornblower has argued that Thucydides relies on Herodotus for a majority of the historical narrative prior to the Persian Wars in the speeches in his work, including the Plataian speeches during their trial in 427.¹⁴ After being besieged by Spartan and Theban forces for several years, the Plataians finally surrendered. The Plataians then were submitted to a trial with Spartan judges, who would decide about their fate. Both the Thebans and Plataians were allowed to speak during the trial, with the

¹¹ Hall (2007), 101-102.

¹² Tausend (1992), 114-118.

¹³ For the loss of influence in the Cyclades: Plut. *de Hdt. Mal.* 21, cf. Hdt. 1.61, 1.64; Arist. *AP* 15.2-3.

¹⁴ Hornblower (1996), 130-133.

latter making a case for their innocence with regards to Athenian imperialism. In their defence, the Plataians relate their history with the Athenians and astutely remark that the Spartans had turned them away and deferred them to their southern neighbours, a story reminiscent of Herodotus' account (Thuc. 3.55.1-3). This similarity probably has a shared provenance that led to a conflation of both accounts. The basis is history as the Plataians themselves perceive it. The original date of the alliance and the story that Herodotus narrates morphed into one shared past as it is remembered by the Plataians in the 420s, the presumed period of Herodotus' work.¹⁵ Intentional history may be at work here. Gehkre describes this term in the following way: "Social knowledge of the past, in other words that which a society knows and holds for true about its past, its 'intentional history', is of fundamental significance for the imaginaire, for the way a society interprets and understands itself, and therefore its inner coherence and ultimately its collective identity."¹⁶

We see that best at work in Thucydides when he narrates the Plataian trial. The Plataians themselves start their history with the Persian Wars as their departure point for the shared history with the Spartans. They claim to have acted well by mentioning their part in the struggle against the Persians. Their role in that conflict actually turns into a defining moment in their history as they juxtapose themselves with the Thebans by claiming that the Plataians were the only one of the Boiotians to have opposed the Persians. Here we see the creation of a "unique Plataian" perspective. Yet Herodotus mentions the Thespians also fighting against the Persian forces at Thermopylae.¹⁷ Of course, what matters during their defence in the trial is what they believe to be true, which is why they enumerate their numerous good deeds. The Plataians even refer to

¹⁵ Flower and Marincola (2002), 2.

¹⁶ Gehkre (2001), 286. For the term, cf. Gehrke (1994). Also: Foxhall et al. (2010).

¹⁷ Thuc.3.54.3; for the Thespians, cf. 7.222; 8.50.

“these great and historical occasions.”¹⁸ Basically, their defence consists of a summary of their history *vis-à-vis* the Spartans, mentioning the Spartan role in creating an Athenian-Plataian alliance, before turning to an accusation of the Thebans. They appropriated history and transformed it into a version of their own that emphasised their own merits and interpretation of events.¹⁹

For the besieged Plataians, after at least sixty years of rivalry with Thebes, their shared history had become one of perpetual hostility. They even evoke this image themselves as they move to their complaints regarding the Thebans. The Plataians mention the Thebans, “who have wronged us repeatedly, and their last aggression, which has been the means of bringing us into our present position ...”²⁰ In their minds, the Thebans were the vicious oppressors, even repeat offenders, and as such, were entrenched in Plataian memory as the eternal opponent.²¹ Other times of less intense struggle or enmity were forgotten as they did not fit in with the current situation and attitudes. With Plataia eventually folding under Theban pressure in 427, coupled with the Athenian self-image of protectors of suppliants against unjust warmongers – notably Theban aggressors – this story correlates best to the topical vicissitudes suffered by the Plataians which would resonate well in Athens itself.²²

That it is possible to leave out parts of history for the sake of historical and rhetorical arguments is proven by the Plataians themselves. At the end of the trial, when they evoke the Spartan role in establishing a Plataian-Athenian rapprochement, they make it seem as if their

¹⁸ Thuc. 3.55.1: ‘καὶ τὰ μὲν παλαιὰ καὶ μέγιστα τοιοῦτοι ἡξιώσαμεν εἶναι, πολέμιοι δὲ ἐγενόμεθα ὕστερον.

¹⁹ That can also be seen in the temple of Athena Areia, where they remember the conflict as an internecine struggle among Boiotians: Yates (2013). For the description of the temple, cf. Paus. 9.4.1-2.

²⁰ Thuc. 3.56.1: ‘Θηβαῖοι δὲ πολλὰ μὲν καὶ ἄλλα ἡμᾶς ἡδίκησαν, τὸ δὲ τελευταῖον αὐτοὶ ξύνιστε, δι’ ὅπερ καὶ τὰδε πάσχομεν.

²¹ Thuc. 3.55.1: Θηβαῖοι ἡμᾶς ἐβιάσαντο.

²² One can think here of Euripides’ *Suppliants*. Cf. Steinbock (2013), 175 n. 95 for further remarks. There is also little doubt that contemporary events coloured his descriptions of the past in Herodotus: Bowie (2007), 30.

special bond with the southern neighbours only started *after* the Persian Wars.²³ They thus blatantly advocate a different history, which demonstrates the malleability of common memory. The passage of time had enabled them to do so as a right amount of time had elapsed for memory to become more flexible. With the “survivors” of the initial phase gone, the stories of the past could be remembered by the newer generations in the fashion that best corresponded to their needs and contemporary situation.²⁴ Instead of referring back to their earliest relations with the Peisistratids, what was remembered was their perpetual struggle with the Thebans after years of toil and the destruction of their town during the Persian Wars. That egregious Theban behaviour lay at the root of the Athenian rapprochement certainly fitted the bill better than any other earlier history that did not contain such political vitriol.

Nevertheless, Thucydides is adamant in referring to 519 as the date of the alliance. In the words of Simon Hornblower, there is a tragic *akribeia* that strengthens the message needed to bring across: the futility of the Plataian-Athenian connection.²⁵ Indeed, Thucydides had constructed a tragic arch that culminated in that final remark which simultaneously shows the longevity and futility of the alliance, as he laments the polis’ fate. But the aorist employed here suggests a past event that does not necessarily entail a continuous process. In other words, the first alliance or contact was arranged in 519 but could have been interrupted in the intermittent period.

Another important aim of Thucydides in this part of his works was to present the otiose uses of the past in rhetorical practice and particularly in interstate relations. Both sides offer conflicting histories to support their argument and thereby sacrifice the historical truth for argumentative needs. These histories are clearly permeated by contemporary attitudes towards

²³ Thuc. 3.55.1; Grethlein (2010), 234.

²⁴ Steinbock (2013), 1-29 for the various theories and carriers of social memory.

²⁵ Hornblower (1987), 35.

one another and twist the past in order to achieve results in the present. Thucydides took issue with the application of these traditional modes of memory that misrepresent the truth.²⁶ By mentioning the date of the alliance, he offers a memento of this attitude. Moreover, it serves as a rectification to the falsified past that both sides utilised, most notably the Plataian implicit claim that their relationship with the Athenians did not antedate the Persian Wars.

Of course, this close reading can solve certain difficulties facing us in reading these texts. Yet, some unanswered questions still remain. What is the basis for assuming the story was adapted to reflect later hostilities? Is it possible to find traces of a more cordial past between the protagonists that they have so cleverly hidden in their own version of history?

II The Peisistratids, Plataians and Thebans: imagined hostilities

From a fifth and fourth century perspective, it seems inevitable that the two Boiotian neighbours would collide. But new inscriptions, combined with the archaeological data from Boiotia, could illuminate an earlier phase when the two neighbours lived harmoniously alongside each other.²⁷ In turn, this disproves the premise that the initial alliance of 519 aggrieved the Thebans, causing hostilities with the Peisistratids. By reviewing other alleged hostilities between the latter two it will become clear that these instances should be rejected and thereby any other proofs of enmity.

A first clue can be gauged from newly unearthed bronze tablets from Thebes. The entire text still needs to be published, but a preliminary version has appeared. One tablet stands out, as it mentions the sale or lease of lands owned by prominent Thebans.²⁸ Most intriguing about these lands is their location, with some located outside the Theban *chora*, more precisely in the

²⁶ Grethlein (2010), 239-240.

²⁷ Bintliff (1994, 1999, 2002) assumes that the ever expanding territories of the city-states in Boiotia with Plataia growing as well to create a self-reliant community. These tendencies would lead to clashes between neighbours but the evidence for Theban expansion in the sixth century points strongly in a northern direction, rather than a southern. Cf. the critical remarks by Mackil (2013), 22 n. 2 on the central-place theory and the dominance of autarky in Bintliff's proposal.

²⁸ Thebes Mus. Inv. 35909; SEG 60.507. The properties in question are described as: ἐπ' Ἀσοπῷ; δι' Ἀσοπῷ and ποτ' Εὐάκροι δι' Ἀσοπῷ by Matthaiou in his preliminary notes.

Parasopia, the region that later was heavily contested by both the Plataians and their bigger neighbour. The reason for the sale or lease is unknown, but speculations have been offered. Matthaiou, for instance, proposes to connect it to the Herodotean account. In that case the properties could have been owned by Theban citizens in the context of a Boiotian *koinon* and, after a falling-out and Athenian intervention, had to be sold.²⁹ The early existence of the *koinon* had been seriously doubted, but this new evidence appears to vindicate proponents of it.³⁰ There is a possibility that the Plataians had been members of this early form of collaborative community or polity as well.³¹ That proposal is not as conjectural as it seems, as they may have been members of the Boiotoi in the mid-fifth century: to put it into perspective, that was after a half-century marked by hostility.³²

Perhaps this inscription indicates a previous peaceful co-existence in the earlier sixth century as the lettering is tentatively dated to the late sixth century.³³ The protection offered by a larger neighbour could have been the main reason as Plataia had suffered from an earthquake sometime after 550 and therefore could have found itself in a vulnerable position in the latter half of the sixth century.³⁴ Thebes would have been an obvious choice.

²⁹ Matthaiou (2014), 220.

³⁰ Early proponent: Larsen (1968), 29-32; Ducat (1973); Buck (1979), 107-120; Siewert (1985), 298-99. However, they mostly based themselves on common coinage, but these are not always indicative of federal institutions, cf. Mackil and van Alfen (2006). New Inscription: Aravantinos (2014); see careful remarks by Mackil (2014), 51.

³¹ Some myopic interpretations of the Boiotoi have dominated the debate on the forming of *koina*, but the complexities of the underlying structures of the later *koinon* have been brilliantly elaborated upon by Mackil (2013). See the remarks in Beck and Ganter (2015) as well.

³² Plataia's membership has been doubted: Bruce (1968), 190; Sordi (1968), 70 and Prandi (1988), 79-91. Others scholars accept its membership; Larsen (1960), 12; Roesch (1965b), 40; Amit (1971), (1973), 87. The proponents base themselves on Hell. Oxy. 16.13 (Bartoletti). The author describes the situation after the destruction of Plataia (ca. 400 B.C.E.), with the Thebans taking over the two Boiotarchs that were previously assigned to Plataia, Scolus, Erythrae and Scaphae. That in itself does not prove membership, but that the Plataians had a Boiotarch assigned to them before is striking.

³³ Matthaiou (2014). It resembles the *kioniskos* dated to 507/6 and found in the same excavation, cf. Aravantinos (2006).

³⁴ Konecny, et al. (2013), 26; 164-168. See the remarks in Horden and Purcell (2000), 305-307 about the ability of communities to quickly recover from earthquakes. Yet what is meant here is not so much an utter destruction and destitution, but merely a temporary setback in Plataia's security and prosperity.

A recent find from Thebes adds plausibility to those prospects. The inscription – again from the previously mentioned find – deals with an arbitration case that pitted the Megarians against the Thebans and Eleutherians, the latter a small town in the Attic-Boiotian frontier region.³⁵ Two aspects of this text are particularly striking. One is the Megarian encroachment upon the border that divides their territory from Boiotia. They have staked their claim on a piece of land that was formerly controlled by an unknown community. Perhaps their behaviour threatened the Plataians as well, seeing that their neighbours came into dispute with the Megarians. The other emphatic feature is the enigmatic union between the Thebans and Eleutherians. According to the preliminary reading, the text in lines 5-6 reads κένικασε ἡ πόλις ἡ Θεβαίων κέλευθεραῖον. Its wording resembles the later form of indicating *sympoliteia*, maybe reflecting the close ties between Thebes and Eleutherai within the context of an early *koinon*.³⁶ If this is correct, and considering the location of Eleutherai, it means that Thebes' territory would have already bordered on Plataia's in an earlier phase than previously assumed.

A phrase in Thucydides may reveal a possible Plataian membership in the *koinon*. During the trial in 427, the Thebans offer a relatively distorted view of the Plataian approach to the Athenians. Claims were made over the original inhabitants and settlement of the town, as well as confounding “mythical” times with the late sixth century.³⁷ That this version of events is unmistakably tampered with by the Thebans to fit their purposes is clear. But it would be too easy to simply dismiss it as propaganda. For the Thebans, it warranted mention that it was the

³⁵ Matthaiou (2014); Thebes Museum no. 35913; *SEG* 60.506.

³⁶ Cf. *SEG* 19, 678; *SEG* 37, 984, 987. Of course, these are much later examples, but a similar unequal relationship between Thebes and a smaller polity close-by, such as Eleutherai, is not out of the question.

³⁷ Thuc. 3.61.2: ἡμεῖς δὲ αὐτοῖς διάφοροι ἐγενόμεθα πρῶτον ὅτι ἡμῶν κτισάντων Πλάταιαν ὕστερον τῆς ἄλλης Βοιωτίας καὶ ἄλλα χωρία μετ' αὐτῆς, ἃ συμμείκτους ἀνθρώπους ἐξελάσαντες ἔσχομεν, οὐκ ἤξιουν οὗτοι, ὥσπερ ἐτάχθη τὸ πρῶτον, ἡγεμονεύεσθαι ὑφ' ἡμῶν, ἔξω δὲ τῶν ἄλλων Βοιωτῶν παραβαίνοντες τὰ πάτρια, ἐπειδὴ προσηναγκάζοντο, προσεχώρησαν πρὸς Ἀθηναίους καὶ μετ' αὐτῶν πολλὰ ἡμᾶς ἔβλαπτον, ἀνθ' ὧν καὶ ἀντέπασχον.

Plataians' fault for breaking up their peaceful relations, not the Thebans. They thus created a history in which the Plataian-Athenian alliance lay at the root of their disputes. It was also an attempt by the Thebans to place the Athenian alliance as the start of Plataian history and belittle the latter's involvement in the Persian wars.³⁸ Notwithstanding the obvious propagandistic locution, there can be some truth in a previous arrangement that saw both parties living harmoniously.

This rhetoric is employed by the Thebans to dismiss the Persian Wars as the watershed in their relations with the two other protagonists. Neither of them refer to the times before the alliance between Plataians and Athenians. Sieving through their statements and stripping off the layers of "deceit," their reluctance is not only a matter of rhetorical tricks. They refused to refer to these earlier times, as they were times of harmony, rather than hostility which did not fit their purposes in the trial. That could have opened the door to supporting the Thebans' claim, and thereby weakened their defence in the process. That is where Thucydides comes into play. Whereas our sources often stress periods of conflict, the historian here tries to correct the distorted histories. His correction of these fallacies points to an earlier start of the entanglement that both parties did not wish to recall. This leads to the possibility that the original alliance did not aggravate affairs, nor drove a wedge between the Peisistratids and Thebans.

That would have been quite a turnaround in their affairs, as their early relations were characterised by friendship, a friendship that appears to have continued throughout the tyranny.. In 546 the Thebans had been ardent financial supporters of the latest attempt by Peisistratus to obtain the tyranny in Athens.³⁹ He was appreciative of this support and showed himself a faithful

³⁸ Price (2001), 103-126; Grethlein (2010), 234.

³⁹ Hdt. 1.61; Arist. *AP* 15.2. The Theban support may have been based on previous endeavours, as Hdt. 1.61 notes. Based on the reciprocal aristocratic relations of that time, it was not uncommon to return the favour according to Herman (1987)

recipient, with traces of his reciprocal generosity reflected in a possible sponsorship at the Apollo Ptoios temple in Boiotia.⁴⁰ The early period is marked by friendship but according to certain strands of scholarship, matters deteriorated in the 530s as the Eleutherians decided to dislodge themselves from Boiotia and turn towards the Peisistratids, to the dismay of the Thebans.⁴¹ The Peisistratids certainly would have showed themselves to be ungrateful friends, if they were responsible for this new situation. Therefore, others have rejected this date and propounded a later date, at the end of the sixth century after the rise of the democracy.⁴² The new document from Thebes appears to support this later date.

A similar critical approach can be applied to other assumed grievances between the two. One notorious example is the Alcmeonid attempt to overthrow the tyrants in 511/0. In this campaign they used a fortress built at Leipsydriion under the peaks of Mount Parnes as their base. Due to its frontier position – and coupled with the desertions of Plataia and Eleutherai before the attack – it was naturally assumed that the Thebans had been willing supporters of this coup and permitted the Alcmeonids to use Boiotian territory as a base.⁴³ Yet our sources do not mention this alleged involvement.⁴⁴ Nor is it certain that there was any need for external intervention to accomplish the feat. Mount Parnes was on the edge of Peisistratid control so it was possible for

⁴⁰ Larson (2013), 420-427.

⁴¹ Schachter (2016a), 46; cf. Pickard-Cambridge (1958); Herington (1985), 87-91; Carpenter (1986), 117-123. According to Paus. 1.38.8, it was the Eleutherians' wish to obtain Athenian citizenship. However, that never materialised as there are no indications of that citizenship ever being given during the Classical period. Following Connor's argument (Connor 1989), we are probably dealing with a later retrojection to explain the past. Therefore Pausanias' story cannot provide a background to the Eleutherian alignment with Athens.

⁴² Connor (1989). His argument is mostly based on a critical assessment of the Parian Marble, which is the strongest indicator for an earlier date. Connor also argues that both of Pausanias' explanations for the Eleutherian alignment are later etymological constructions to explain the contemporary situation.

⁴³ Buck (1979), 113-114.

⁴⁴ Hdt. 5.62.2; Arist. *AP* 19.3.; Aristoph. Schol. ad *Lys.* 665.

the Alcmeonids and their partisans to gather on the outskirts of Attica, outside the grasp of the tyrants.⁴⁵

Another point is the overthrow of the tyrants. If the Thebans were as agitated with the Peisistratids as they are commonly portrayed to be, surely they would have been involved in their disposal. But that is not the case. Of course we are dealing with scanty source material, but their reticence on two occasions is at least striking. Though prudence is warranted in employing an *argumentation ex silentio*, this point merits more analysis. It offers verification of an alliance between the tyrants and the Plataians. Like their Boiotian “brethren,” the Plataians are a noticeable omission in the historical record regarding the removal of the Peisistratids. Conversely, there are indications that corroborate an alliance between the two. Their support for the latter is implied by the fact that the Thessalian cavalry, sent to support the tyrants, passed through Plataian territory unhindered. Passive support is not conclusive, but does point in the direction of collaboration. But why did the Plataians not defend their allies more overtly? Herodotus provides an answer: the Athenian tyrants only reached out to one particular ally for help, the Thessalians.⁴⁶

That allows for the eventuality that the Plataians were not approached for support. Why so? Perhaps they were already friends with the Spartans at that time, which could also explain why they approached Cleomenes when under duress. Another explanation is more mundane: the military prowess of the Thessalian cavalry. These added something special to the Peisistratid forces, something the Plataians could not offer. The cavalry was instrumental in the victory and can be conceived of as part of a presupposed plan. The first battle between Peisistratid partisans

⁴⁵ Anderson (2003), 34. The area ruled by the Peisistratids was probably restricted to the natural boundaries formed by Mount Aigaleios, Pentelikon and Hymettos, although it remains hard to precisely delineate their territory.

⁴⁶ Hdt. 5.63.3: Οἱ δὲ Πεισιστρατίδαι προτυνθανόμενοι ταῦτα ἐπεκαλέοντο ἐκ Θεσσαλίας ἐπικουρίην: ἐπεποίητο γὰρ σφι συμμαχίη πρὸς αὐτούς. Note Herodotus’ wording here, as opposed to his wording regarding the Plataian situation.

and Spartans makes that clear: the fields around Phaleron were mown to optimise the effectiveness of cavalry (Hdt. 5.63.4). These explications are not diametrically opposed; rather, they can reinforce one another. The lack of military benefits offered by the Plataians neutralised the need to avoid a potential conflict of interest from their side. The potential advantage of the Plataian contingent did not outweigh the uncertainty of their commitment, or even the risk of a *volte-face*.

A final note is linked to the Thessalian connection to the Peisistratids. Their friendly relations with the Peisistratids did not sever the latter's ties *vis-à-vis* the Thebans, as it is often claimed. The ambiguity surrounding this position and extremities in dating prevents any plausible argument to be made to regard the Thessalians as catalysts in the political landscape of central Greece at the end of the sixth century.⁴⁷

In the following section I intend to explore the context of 507/6 and the developments in polity building in Boiotia. It describes a possible reason for *why* there was a conflict between the Thebans and Plataians at that time after peaceful collaboration. This will contextualise the story of Herodotus and offer a plausible alternative setting for the formation of a new alliance between Athens and Plataia.

III Conflict and centralisation in Boiotia

The downfall of the tyranny and the rise of the democracy brought about a dramatic change on the Attic peninsula, both in its political system and its spatial organisation.⁴⁸ The limited political grasp of the tyranny was replaced by an all-encompassing political system that incorporated all

⁴⁷ This position is mostly based on a rigorous dating of the Battle of Keressos between Thessalians and Thebans to ca. 520, cf. Moretti (1962), 104ff.; Buck (1979), 108. The two Plutarchan accounts are conflicting and state different dates; Plut. *Cam.* 19.3 (first half sixth century); Plut. *De mal. Her.* 33.4 (ca. 480 BCE). This has led to various positions to date the battle: ca. 600 BCE by Fossey (1990) 140; 571 BCE by Guillon (1963), 95-96; 540-520 BCE by Beloch (1893-1904), I 205; 525-519 BCE by Buck (1972), (1979), 111-2; 505-498 BCE: Tausend (1992), 32; pre-481 BCE by Larsen (1968), 30 and 484 BCE by Sordi (1993), 31. The archaeological evidence suggests earlier in the sixth century, rather than the latter half: Lehmann (1983).

⁴⁸ For these changes, see for instance Anderson (2003), but also Siewert (1982) and Traill (1974).

of Attica with Athens as its centre. Before this, the frontier region was marked by fluidity with less emphasis on political inclusion; but the democracy strove to establish its frontier with conspicuous, monumental constructions meant to demarcate the geographical limits of Attica.⁴⁹ Naturally, the integration of various contested border-areas such as Oinoe and Phyle could have upset some in Thebes, especially because Boiotia witnessed its own experiments in state-building at the end of the sixth century.

In the second half of the sixth century, the northern half of Boiotia was occupied with war as evinced by the numerous dedications at the Zeus sanctuary at Olympia.⁵⁰ Increasingly, it seems the Thebans and their allies were gaining the upper hand over their nemesis, the Orchomenians. Their friendship with the Peisistratids had kept their southern flank safe and allowed them to focus all efforts on the north. New-found Theban confidence as the *de-facto* leader of the Boiotians is best reflected in the appearance of dedications made by these “Boiotoi.”⁵¹ Their increased emergence in the last quarter of the sixth century could point to redoubled efforts to create a common polity.⁵² With the reticent attitude of the Peisistratids, a similar process could have taken place in southern Boiotia. The change in Athenian leadership would have swiftly changed this outlook. Instead of a “far-away” friend, the Thebans were confronted by a neighbouring power with different intentions.⁵³ This change in outlook is

⁴⁹ Paga (2015).

⁵⁰ *NIO* 121; 122 (*SEG* 24.300); 123 (*SEG* 42.381). See also Schachter (2014) for comments.

⁵¹ A shared dedication by the Lokrians and Boiotoi: Bousquet (1991), 167-168 (*SEG* 41.506; Knoepfler 1992, 422, 15; *BE* 1992, 274); Larson (2007b), 145-146. A shared dedication with the Halaians: Schachter (2014), 74 (cf. *SEG* 13.371; *BE* 2008). Also several dedications at the Ptoion, but see the critical remarks by Ganter (2013).

⁵² Mackil (2014).

⁵³ Pelling (2006). He argues that a tyrant offers external advantages to its neighbours and is therefore of more use to supportive elites, like the Thebans in the case of the Peisistratids, than other forms of government.

probably the reason for the Boiotians' involvement in the second attempt to install Isagoras as tyrant of Athens in 507/6 to replace the democracy.⁵⁴

The appropriation of the borderlands by the democracy then could have affected matters in southern Boiotia as well, the area that lay at the heart of the Plataian-Theban dispute. The chain of reactions could have progressed up to the point that disputes arose within southern Boiotia, disrupting the previous peaceful co-existence between Plataia and Thebes. According to Herodotus, tensions arose because the Thebans “pressured” (πιεζεύμενοι) their neighbour. πιέζειν often means to claim resources, either cash and crop resources, or land. Throughout Herodotus the πιεζόμενοι are specifically those who face losing their land to expansionist encroachments or through military action.⁵⁵ From the aftermath of the dispute it becomes clear that land-redistribution was an issue, as the Corinthians decided to delineate the borders between the two poleis. According to Bonner and Smith, the borders were only of secondary importance. The new inscription from Thebes seems to confirm that image.⁵⁶

The other resolution issued by the Corinthians regarded a different matter of primary importance: ἔαν Θηβαίους Βοιωτῶν τοὺς μὴ βουλομένους ἐς Βοιωτοὺς τελέειν. Recent work on this particular phrase offers a fresh perspective on the situation. Older translations automatically assumed that the sentence should be translated as “the Thebans should leave alone

⁵⁴ Of course, that does not exclude the possibility that they were allied with the Spartans, as proposed by others: Schachter (2016c). Sommerstein and Bayliss (2013), 216 n. 65 claim that the Thebans were not allied with the Spartans, which would support my point that their involvement was motivated by their own aims. A recently published inscription from Thebes (*SEG* 56.521) further supports the idea of conflicted territories playing a major role.

⁵⁵ Claim of cash and crop resources: Hdt. 5.35; 6.139; 7. 120-121; 8.142. Claim of land: Hdt. 4.11; 4.13; 4.105; 4.118; 6.34).

⁵⁶ Bonner and Smith (1945), 14. Inscription: Matthaiou (2014). That takes on added importance with the knowledge that borders were hard to delineate in antiquity, see for the instance the novel research by Sylvian Fachard: Fachard, et al. (2015); Knodell, et al. (2016). Cf. Farinetti (2011), 188-189 for the difficulty in establishing the border between Plataia and Thebes.

those unwilling to join the Boiotoi.”⁵⁷ The problem with that particular translation is that it assumed that either the Plataians had never been part of the Boiotoi and were now forced to join a group with that name. A more pressing point, however, is the usage of the verb in Herodotus. Throughout his work, τελέειν predominantly refers to financial contributions or financial transactions. The anomaly between translation and usage has led Emily Mackil to propose a different translation. Rather than emphasising the need to “join” a developed federal structure, it should be read as “those unwilling to contribute to the Boiotoi” or “take part” in them. In her view, the phrase could relate to the *tripodophoria* ritual, whereby neighbouring communities brought tripods to the Theban Apollo Ismenios temple to signal the ritual transfer of their territory to the Thebans and thereby become “Boiotian.”⁵⁸ Evidence for this practice comes from the epigraphical record. One dedication to the deity comes from the Potnians, a community in the Parasopia and close to Thebes.⁵⁹ Other attestations prove more difficult as the dedicants’ names are too lacunose to prove anything.⁶⁰

Most of these dedications are dated to the late sixth and early fifth century. This is striking, as apparently the Thebans started demanding proofs of loyalty from the neighbouring communities. It coincides with the period of the Cleisthenic reforms that incorporated the outer edges of the Attic peninsula. Could it be that the Thebans wished to counteract this Athenian expansionism because of fears that the Athenians could reach out to border communities in the

⁵⁷ How and Wells (1912-1923), II 110; Scott (2005), 375-377, cf. Roesch (1965b), 34-36; Larsen (1968), 28-29; Buck (1979), 124; Knoepfler (1992), 422; Mafodda (2000), 101-102; Waanders (1983). Cf. note 3.

⁵⁸ Mackil (2013), 27; 186-188. Also her treatment of the Thebageneis, a group of people probably living in the Parasopia, cf. Mackil (2014).

⁵⁹ Keramopoulos (1917), 64: Ἀπόλλωνι Ποτνιῆς.

⁶⁰ Late sixth century *kioniskos*: SEG 22.417; BE 1964, 202: [Ἀπόλλων]ι ἱσιμ[ενίοι]- - -[- - -]εῖες κα[- - -]. Originally it was proposed to read Θεισπι[εῖες but Roesch (1965a), 261-263 n. 1 offers several restorations of the dedicators. Schachter (1981-1994), I 83 n. 2 mentions that even Θεβαγεν[εῖες and [Θεβαγε]νεῖες are possible. See another Potnian dedication in SEG 60.513; Aravantinos (2010), 229. Another is a stone base from the fifth century that offers no real help in terms of determining the identity of the dedicants: Keramopoulos (1930-1931), 106: [Ἀπόλλων]ι ἱσιμενίοι | ἄρχοντος | [- - -]νεῖες ἀνέθειαν.

frontier as well, such as those in the Parasopia? With the Plataians' previous ties to Athens in mind, their loyalty towards Thebes may have been waning. These confirmations of allegiance can then be placed in a context of territorial dispute, especially with the fertile lands of the Parasopia at stake.⁶¹

At the same time, parts of Boiotia were undergoing radical changes with a new polity taking hold. Whether or not it is possible to speak of a federal system, it is certain that the communal identity uniting Boiotians had been developing in this period and was providing a blueprint for collaboration.⁶² That movement was spearheaded by the Thebans who were joined by other communities.⁶³ A looming foreign threat could have been presented the perfect opportunity to rally the troops under one united banner. The Thebans could point to the need for collaborative actions while simultaneously expanding their grasp over the southern frontier of the region.

The opportunity to oppose this freshly arisen threat presented itself in 507/6 and might serve as one possible explanation for the use of shared Boiotian coinage at this time. Besides the obvious economic function to ease commercial interaction, one of the other functions of collective coinage is military collaboration.⁶⁴ Especially the larger denominations could be connected to the campaigns of 507/6 as the pay for soldiers demanded minting a large amount of coinage.⁶⁵

In my opinion, these examples paint a picture of increasing “centralisation” of Theban power within Boiotia, partially to expand their own power and to enhance their ability to cope

⁶¹ Fertile lands: Farinetti (2011), 180; Konecny, et al. (2013), 21-22.

⁶² Larson (2007a); Kühr (2006); Kowalzig (2007) for this identity.

⁶³ As Mackil (2013) points out, the Boiotoi may have been a façade utilised by the Thebans to control Boiotia. See also the insightful remarks by Ganter (2013). For the other communities, cf. Hdt. 5.79.

⁶⁴ Parise (2011); Psoma (2015). On the coinage in general, see Schachter (2016a), 48. For the increasing importance of economic factors driving collective coinage, cf. Mackil (2013), 247-251.

⁶⁵ Mackil (2013), 249.

with other larger *poleis*, and partially to respond to the growing power of the Athenians in the south. In that sense, it was the perfect combination of internal forces and external influences.⁶⁶ It could therefore be in this context that the Plataians came under duress from the Thebans, and subsequently approached the Athenians. The pressure exerted by the Thebans could allude to two forms of “contributing” to the Boiotoi. In one form, it means financial and manpower contributions to the war-effort. But it also meant a proof of devotion to the Boiotoi as other communities in the Parasopia had submitted to. As this entailed losing their territory – their land becoming Theban – the latter demand can explain why the choice between Thebans and Athenians was an easy one for the Plataians: even if they entered into a client-patron relationship, at least they kept their territorial rights.

The Athenians were located close-by and were an obvious ally against the Theban forces. Moreover, with the fall of the Peisistratids, their alliance with the Plataians may have come to an end – but that does not mean their relationship with Athens had been lost overnight.⁶⁷ Considering the dire situation the Plataians were in, extreme measures were warranted to obtain Athenian support: that is where supplication comes into play.

Supplication was often the last refuge in diplomatic interaction and reflected the predicament the suppliant was in. Acceptance was not a given, despite common assumptions.⁶⁸ Even if all the traditional actions or supplication had been undertaken, the decision still lay with

⁶⁶ Meidani (2008) purports that the Boiotoi were specifically called into being to participate in the invasion of Attica in 507/6, yet see Beck and Ganter (2015) for criticism on such monolithic interpretations of the Boiotoi as only a military alliance.

⁶⁷ It could explain why the Thebans pressured the Plataians, believing there were no other powers protecting them. Without external support, the Plataians certainly were no match for the Thebans. Moreover, Theban efforts would now not lead to any conflict with befriended tyrants, as it had in the past. See also the previous remark on the aorist tense used by Thucydides that implies a past event, but not necessarily a continuous process.

⁶⁸ Naiden (2006), 105-169. Notwithstanding the pressure the *supplicandus* was put under by this gesture: Parker (1983), 185.

the *supplicandus*, as Cleomenes' behaviour towards the Plataians shows.⁶⁹ Thus, the Peisistratids would not have been forced to accept the plea as it often mistakenly assumed.⁷⁰ If acceptance led to a confrontation with the Thebans, it was an easily avoidable conflict for the tyrants, unless one ascribes to them malicious attitudes towards their friends.⁷¹ Unless one is willing to accept ambivalent examples of hostility between them, there is no ground to accept such motives groundlessly.

On the other hand, the deliberate choice to accept the Plataians' plea better aligns with strategic considerations by the young democracy, with the Boiotian armies under Theban auspices plundering the outskirts of Attica. As hostilities were already underway, a potential buffer zone between the Theban and Athenian spheres of influence seems like sound logic and Plataia is a prime candidate for such a role.⁷² Moreover, interventionist politics in Boiotia suit the democracy better than the tyranny as the tyrants had been on good terms with the Thebans. The democracy had no such considerations and protecting the Plataians also served the additional

⁶⁹ Hdt. 6.108.1-2. Presumably he had no intentions of interfering with the affairs of the Thebans, what could equally apply to the Peisistratids.

⁷⁰ E.g. Mafodda (1996), 107-108: "una opportuna motivazione religiosa alla decisione del tiranno di schierarsi dalla parte di Platea contro Tebe." He is not completely wrong in believing it would have offered the Peisistratids a religious excuse to accept the Plataians, but that does not explain their willingness to affront the Thebans, unless one adheres to the notion that the two parties had been alienated (but see above).

⁷¹ Interesting in this aspect is also the analysis of the situation by Plut. *de Hdt. mal.* 861e: εἰ μὴ κακότης Ἡρόδοτος, ἐπίβουλοι μὲν Λακεδαιμόνιοι καὶ κακοήθεις, ἀναίσθητοι δ' Ἀθηναῖοι παρακρουσθέντες, Πλαταιεῖς δ' οὐ κατ' εὖνοιαν οὐδὲ τιμὴν ἀλλὰ πολέμου πρόφασιν εἰς μέσον ἐρρίψαν ("If then Herodotus is not malicious, the Lacedaemonians must have been both fraudulent and spiteful; and the Athenians fools, in suffering themselves to be thus imposed on; and the Plataeans were brought into play, not for any good-will or respect, but as an occasion of war").

⁷² Hostilities may have broken out in the intermittent period between the downfall of the tyranny and the democracy (or continued after the events of 507/6) see the dedication to commemorate a victory over the Tanagraians by an unknown victor. Schachter (2016b) offers a compelling case to view the Athenians as the dedicants. For the buffer role and control of important routes, cf. Thuc. 2.71-8; Amit (1973), 88-98; Kagan (1974), 103; 172-176; Hornblower (1991), 357-361. There is also new evidence from Thebes that illuminates the Boiotian perspective for participation in this war, presumably over the outlying regions: SEG 56.521. First versions of the inscription's text can be found in Aravantinos (2006); BE 2008 no. 236. See also Berti (2010). Herodotus' narrative suggests some time had elapsed between the capture of the outer edges of Athens and the eventual defeat of the Boiotian forces (Mackil (2013), 188).

purpose of disrupting the Theban expansion in the southern region of Boiotia and keeping the region atomised, rather than united under Theban auspices.

That the young democracy was more adventurous than the preceding tyranny is perhaps best described by Herodotus himself. After describing the invasion of 507/6 B.C.E., he goes on to say that the democracy has given the Athenians unprecedented confidence bordering on recklessness.⁷³ That the Athenians were unafraid of venturing beyond the borders and establishing a presence abroad, is shown by their actions at Chalkis after their military victory. Having vanquished the Chalkidians, the Athenians not only expelled a large group of the defeated, but also founded a cleruchy to be inhabited by Athenians and to keep the Chalkidians in check.⁷⁴ Another example of their new found confidence is the dedication of a four-horse chariot at the Acropolis to commemorate their victory. The inscription accompanying it is unequivocal in its message, especially the part that specifies punishing the Boiotians and Chalkidians for their *hybris*.⁷⁵ In other words, the new government of Athens was celebrating its new place in Greek affairs in a grandiose manner.

IV Conclusion

In this article I have offered a new, perhaps account of the Plataian-Athenian alignment. Although the reconstruction has its controversial aspects, it does not undermine the paramount importance of revisiting this oft frequented event. The controversy that surrounds this alliance has intrigued scholars since the nineteenth century. Options have included emending the Thucydidean text to accommodate historical circumstances. What I hope to have shown is that it

⁷³ Hdt. 5.79: εἰ καὶ Ἀθηναῖοι τυραννευόμενοι μὲν οὐδαμῶν τῶν σφέαςπεριοικούντων ἦσαν τὰ πολέμια ἀμείνου ἀπαλλαχθέντες δὲ τυράννων μακρῶπρῶτοι ἐγένοντο. There is a possibility that the brash behavior of the early democracy is a retrojection from the period after the Persian Wars, cf. Forsdyke (2001). Also, the Cleisthenic programme significantly boosted the numbers of men Athens could utilize in wars: van Effenterre (1976); Frost (1984); Singor (2000).

⁷⁴ Hdt. 5.77.2-3. For the remains of the cleruchy's fortress, cf. Coulton, et al. (2002).

⁷⁵ Hdt. 5.77.4. The actual inscription has also been found: IG I³ 501A+B; for a commentary, see Kaczko (2016), 1-16.

is possible to offer a revised account without any emendations. The consequences of this revised account are clear. First, there were no hostilities between the Peisistratids and Thebans, and certainly not because of the Plataian-Peisistratid alliance in 519.⁷⁶ That relationship was interrupted by the fall of the tyrants. Secondly, Thucydides mentions the date for the alliance not as an ambassador of *Rankean* truth, but to emphasise the futility of the arguments employed by both parties in the Plataian debate. His date, therefore, is aimed at undermining the arguments presented and to correct the claims made by the Plataians that their ties to the Athenian polis do not antedate the Persian Wars. He merely pinpoints a date for an original alliance, but that does not necessarily imply a continuation of that alliance. Finally, the revised account shows that the rise of the Athenian democracy caused a seismic shift in the political landscape of central Greece. Their efforts and interference in Boiotian affairs laid the foundation for generations of enmity and rivalry within this tripartite relationship.

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⁷⁶ My proposed sequence of events also opens up the possibility for the re-dating of a dedication by Hipparchus at the Ptoion in Boiotia. Commonly dated to 520-514 BCE on stylistic grounds, with the death of Hipparchus offering a *terminus ante quem*, it was dated to 520/19 due to the insistence on dating the Plataian episode to 519. Finally, it is now possible to follow Ducat's initial dating of the inscription and regard the offering as a symbol of continued friendship between the Peisistratids and the Thebans. IG I³ 1470 (520-514 BCE). The lettering suggests a later date; Ducat (1973), 66 ("vers 515").

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